

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 11402

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CU, IT, US

SUBJECT: VISIT OF CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. MFA'S ACTING OFFICER DIRECTOR FOR LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS BRIEFED EMBOFF ON RECENT FIVE DAY (AUGUST 10-15) OFFICIAL VISIT TO ITALY OF CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER RUAL ROA. SOURCE DESCRIBED VISIT AS HURRIEDLY ARRANGED AND SAID IT WAS MADE IN RETURN FOR A VISIT BY UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE BENSI TO CUBA IN NOVEMBER 1973.

2. DURING THE VISIT ROA HAD SUBSTANTIVE TALKS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MORO AND UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE BENSI AND PAID A BRIEF COURTESY CALL ON PRIME MINISTER RUMOR. ROA TOLD ITALIANS THAT THE CUBAN ECONOMIC SITUATION IS NOW BRIGHTER, LARGELY OWING TO A GOOD SUGAR CANE HARVEST THIS YEAR. HE DISCUSSED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YEAR-OLD ITALIAN-CUBAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION AGREEMENT FOR WHICH ITALIANS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MEET ALL THEIR OBLIGATIONS AS A RESULT OF DOMESTIC ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND TIGHT MONEY POLICY. THE ITALIANS HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT ROA WAS NOT OVERLY CONCERNED BY THIS PROBLEM.

3. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, ROA TWICE MENTIONED THAT CUBA
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WANTS TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICAN

COUNTRIES WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING CLOSE TIES WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES. ROA EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT THESE RELATIONS WOULD DEVELOP NOTING THAT CUBA ALREADY HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH 10 LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND, EXPECTS TO REESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH SEVERAL OTHERS IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. ROA EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RIGHTIST BLOCK IN LATIN AMERICAN CENTERED AROUND CHILE, BOLIVIA, AND BRAZIL WHICH WOULD WORK ACTIVELY AGAINST CUBAN INTERESTS IN THE AREA.

4. CONCERNING US-CUBAN RELATIONS, ROA DESCRIBED IN POSITIVE TERMS THE RECENT VISIT TO HAVANA OF SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS STAFFER PAT HOLT AND THE SUBSEQUENT STATEMENT OF SENATOR FULBRIGHT. HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT HIXON WAS PROBABLY A GOOD THING IN TERMS OF US-CUBAN BILATERAL RELATIONS BECAUSE NIXON HAD CLOSE TIES TO QUOTE THE FLORIDA-BASED ANTI-CASTRO LOBBY END QUOTE. HE INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT PRESIDENT FORD BUT JOKED TO FOREIGN MINISTER MORO THAT THE CUBANS WOULD WAIT TO SEE QUOTE WHETHER HE IS A FORD OR A LINCOLN END QUOTE, WITH THE CUBANS PREFERRING THE LATTER. IN TERMS OF REESTABLISHING RELATIONS, ROA SAID THAT THE US WOULD HAVE TO END ITS SUPPORT OF THE BOYCOTT AGAINST CUBA; AFTER THAT OTHER MATTERS COULD BE DISCUSSED.

5. DOMESTICALLY, ROA DREW ATTENTION TO THE NEW EXPERIMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS BEEN STARTED IN ONE PROVINCE WITH THE POPULAR ELECTION OF LOCAL OFFICIALS. ROA SAID THAT THIS EXPERIMENT WOULD BE EXPANDED TO OTHER AREAS IF IT PROVES TO BE SUCCESSFUL. VOLPE

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